

# **Frequently Asked Questions**

## **A Parent Fact Sheet for the 2005 Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey**

### **What is the Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey (NRPFSS)?**

The survey is designed to provide schools and communities with important local-level data to help them plan effective prevention and intervention programs to reduce substance abuse, and antisocial behaviors among youth. The survey is conducted with 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students on alternating years. The Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Health and Human Services System began co-administering the Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey in October 2003. This fact sheet answers important questions about the survey.

### **What is the focus of the School Survey?**

The student survey collects information on rates of substance abuse and antisocial behaviors among youth. This information is important for understanding the extent of substance abuse and other issues that may exist at the community level. In addition, the survey also collects extremely important data on the risk and protective factors that predispose youth toward—or protect them against—substance abuse and/or violence. Just as there are scientifically-validated risk factors and protective factors for heart disease and other chronic illnesses, there are also now scientifically-validated risk and protective factors for substance abuse as well. Having information on the factors present at the local level allows schools and communities to select effective and locally-appropriate prevention strategies that can reduce substance abuse and related problems among youth.

### **Who can participate in the survey?**

All public and private schools and their community partners are eligible to participate in the survey, regardless of prior participation. Students in the 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades will be surveyed at each participating school. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Each school has a right to decline participation in the survey, just as each student in a school has a right to decline participation if he or she wishes. However, broad participation in the survey is needed so that an accurate representation of students' needs and behaviors can be assessed at the state, regional and local levels.

### **Why should my school participate?**

By participating in this survey, your school and its community partners have a valuable opportunity to learn more about the needs of its youth. The authorized representative of each participating school will receive an individualized report containing local-level data. The results of this survey will assist community school administrators, faculty, staff and their community partners to:

- gather information regarding factors which may affect student academic achievement and career planning goals;
- conduct strategic prevention planning based on the needs of youth in the district or surrounding communities;
- gather information that will help to target behavior problems related to substance abuse and/or violence;
- estimate the need for specific types of prevention services within the community;

- meet the goals outlined in the district's Comprehensive Plan as it relates to school environment, community involvement, learning process, and school risk factors; and
- enable schools and community coalitions to meet the local risk and protective factor data requirement that is increasingly being required by federal substance abuse prevention funders.

### **How will the data be presented in the report?**

The survey reports contain data by grade level, as long as there are a minimum of 25 students in each grade that complete the survey. This minimum number is used to preserve student anonymity. Schools and school districts may also elect to create a larger survey pool by grouping several schools or districts together by coding all surveys within that group with the same geographic code. Likewise, the data reports can be generated on a county level. In these last scenarios, a single report would present data for the entire geographic area.

### **Are sensitive questions asked?**

The survey questions have been designed to measure key behaviors and risk and protective factors without asking sensitive questions, although it is possible that some questions may be considered sensitive by some persons. The survey includes questions related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; related risk and protective factors; and antisocial and violent behaviors. It is important to remember that the survey is anonymous, so no student response will ever be able to be connected with a student.

### **What is the cost of the survey to the school district?**

There is no financial cost associated with participating in the survey, and complimentary survey data reports will be provided to each participating school or school/community partnership. Since the survey is self-administered during school hours, however, schools do need to set aside time during a school day for the survey to be administered, and designate a contact person to coordinate the distribution and collection of surveys and survey instructions. Some assistance with survey distribution and collection may be available for schools or districts that request it.

### **What if a student does not want to participate, or a parent does not want their student to participate?**

Each student's participation in this study is completely voluntary. At the beginning of the class period when the survey will be administered, the teacher will read a prepared statement that informs the students that their participation is voluntary. They will be given the option to decline to participate, or to skip any question that they prefer not to answer. Students who decline to participate in the survey will be provided with an alternative activity to do while the survey is being administered. Likewise, parents have the option to choose not to have their student participate. Recent federal guidance indicates that schools may use passive consent to participate in the survey, but must inform parents of the survey opportunity and provide them with a mechanism for opting their student out if they so desire.

### **Is student participation anonymous?**

Yes, completely. The student will be given a survey booklet that contains the question items and a place for him or her to record his or her response. The survey booklet will not have the student's name, or any other identifying information on it. Before they begin, students will be reminded that they should not write their name or other identifying information on the booklet. When completing the survey, students will be arranged in the classroom so that their responses cannot be seen by the

teacher administering the survey or by any of the student's peers. At the end of the class period, the survey booklets will immediately be gathered and placed in a sealed envelope that is pre-posted to the survey contractor who will scan the surveys and generate the data reports.

### **What will the students be asked to do?**

The students will be asked to complete a self-administered survey questionnaire during one class period at school. The student will be given a survey booklet that contains the survey questions. The student will be asked to read each question and select the answer in the survey booklet that most closely matches the way he/she feels. All questions are self-reported, and no physical tests or exams are involved.

### **How long does it take to complete the survey?**

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and will be administered during a single class period. Although it is expected that the students will have sufficient time to complete the entire survey, they will be informed that they should answer as many questions as possible during the class but not be concerned if they are not able to finish all of them. Students who finish before the end of class will be asked to work quietly at their desks while their classmates finish.

### **How will the survey be administered?**

The survey will be administered in the classroom by the teacher. Schools will be provided with all necessary materials for completing the survey, including teacher instructions for administering the survey and a written script that will be read to the students at the beginning of the class that explains the purpose and voluntary nature of the survey. In addition, each participating school building will be asked to designate a contact person, who will receive additional training and assistance to support survey administration within the school building. At the end of the survey period, students will place the survey booklets in envelopes that are immediately sealed. Sealed surveys from all participating classrooms will be collected by the designated school site coordinator, who will place the surveys in previously supplied packaging marked with return postage and the address of the survey contractor. The school will then ship the surveys to the survey contractor who will scan them and create local survey data reports.

### **When will the survey be administered?**

The survey will be administered from October 17 to 28, 2005. Participating schools will be asked to reserve a survey date within that time frame. Within a given school, the survey will be administered to all participating grades during the same class period. This will help avoid students discussing the questions with classmates who have not yet completed the survey and biasing the results.

### **When will the participating schools and/or school districts get their results?**

Survey reports will be mailed to the designated local school or school/community representative approximately 60 days after the surveys are returned to the survey contractor for scanning and processing.

### **In what other ways will the survey data be used?**

Information from the NRPFS Survey can be used to meet a variety of needs at the community and state levels. In addition to the school and community uses listed on page one of this Fact Sheet, the survey data will also enable schools, communities and state agencies to:

- identify the priority problem behaviors related to substance abuse and violence at the

- community, regional and state levels;
- conduct effective substance abuse and violence prevention planning processes;
- provide evidence of need for interventions and resources in priority issue areas;
- make resource and policy decisions regarding interventions to address these priority issues;
- provide the valid local risk and protective factor information required by most State and Federal substance abuse prevention funders
- provide state-level data that can be used to compare results to national surveys on drug use.
- provide information to meet the federal requirement under the “No Child Left Behind” Act that require each State to maintain a Uniform Management of Information Reporting System (UMIRS) to collect and report on statewide incidence, prevalence and perceptions regarding student substance abuse and violence.

## **Who can I call for further information?**

For more information related to the NRPFS Survey, please contact:

Laurie Barger Sutter  
Behavioral Health Prevention Manager  
Nebraska Health and Human Services System  
P.O. Box 98925  
Lincoln, NE 68509-8925  
[laurie.sutter@hhss.ne.gov](mailto:laurie.sutter@hhss.ne.gov)  
(402) 479-5573